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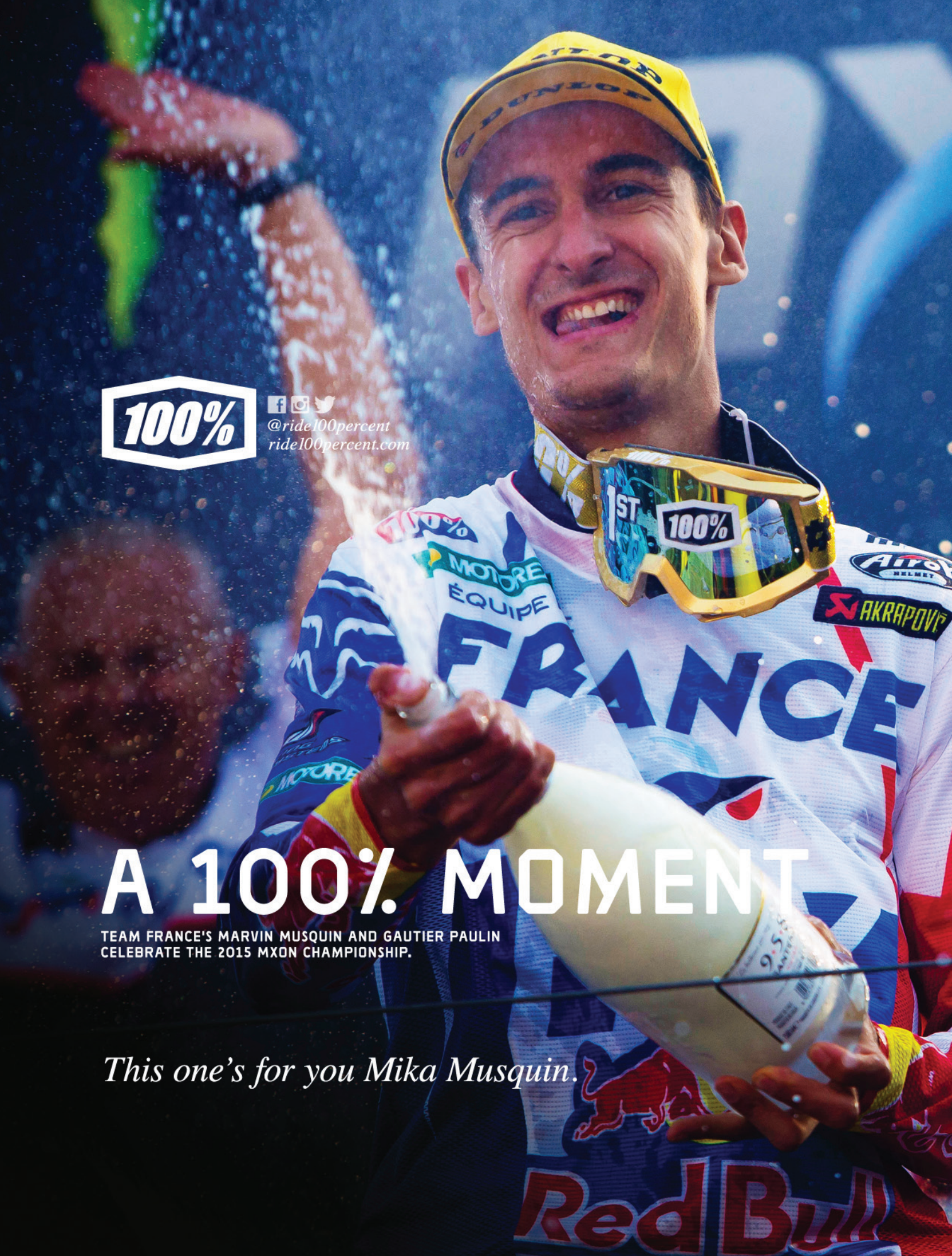


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TEAM FRANCE'S MARVIN MUSQUIN AND GAUTIER PAULIN
CELEBRATE THE 2015 MXON CHAMPIONSHIP.

This one's for you Mika Musquin.







MX

There's something going on...

Motocross might be shifting in the way it is perceived and enjoyed at circuits and through screens but the explosion of atmosphere and emotion at Ernée was nothing short of incredible last weekend. Team France sent the 'masses' bananas on an immaculate stage for the biggest race of the year

Photo by Ray Archer







Swinging back and forth...

A firm repost from Jorge Lorenzo after his disappointment at Misano with victory at Aragon and his second victory in a row at the scenic but slightly isolated circuit in Spain. With Rossi third on the podium the gap in the championship is fourteen points with four races to go

Photo by Monster Energy/Northcott



MotoGP





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0

WSBK

Doff of the cap sir...

Twenty-eight years old and Jonathan Rea fulfils predictions of those 'in the know' by trouncing World Superbike in his first year with Kawasaki. His form has been unbeatable all year and the inevitable was confirmed at Jerez as he became Britain's fifth world champ in the class in almost thirty years of existence of the series

Photo by Graeme Brown/Kawasaki





MARVIN MUSQUIN



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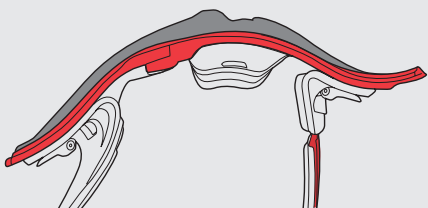


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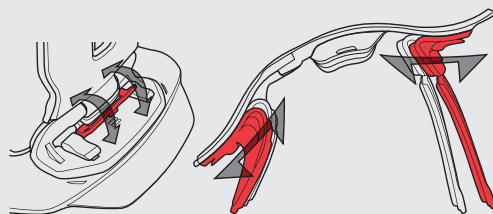
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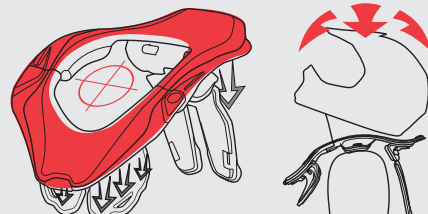
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MX

MONSTER ENERGY MOTOCROSS C

ERNEE · SEPTEMBER 27th · 69th EDITION

Classification: France, USA, Belgium

MXGP winner: Justin Barcia, Yamaha

MX2 winner: Marvin Musquin, KTM

MX Open winner: Romain Febvre, Yamaha

ERNEE, FRANCE



PLAY

OF NATIONS

MIXON

MAGNIFIQUE



By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer

THE ROOF WAS FIRMLY DETACHED FROM ERNÉE CIRCUIT IN THE NORTHWEST OF FRANCE FOR THE 69TH MOTOCROSS OF NATIONS AND AN ANNUAL EVENT THAT MATCHED AND BETTERED A MEMORABLE 2005 EDITION AT THE SAME SITE. READ ON FOR REACTION AND IMAGES...

The Monster Energy Motocross of Nations is sixty-nine years old but judging on the attraction and energy of the event there is definitely an enduring Benjamin Button effect going on. Much was expected of Ernée. Not only through the fact that the home country were defending champions, and perennial favourites (and the goliaths of the tale) Team USA had another strong team of title winners but because of memories of the same venue ten years earlier that had brought a new intensity and life force to an annual tournament that had waned in the formative years of the century.

Ernée did not disappoint both on the well-prepared hard-pack and off. The largely partisan crowd noisily pushed Romain Febvre, Gautier Paulin and Marvin Musquin (perhaps the darling of the trip thanks to his U.S. success and the backstory of his brother's recent paralysis) onto new heights and offset the vast amount of pressure that the spotlight delivered.



1200 volunteers surrounded a track that had been carefully groomed and assisted by rainfall in the week leading up to the fixture. "The track was unbelievable; it was prepped to perfection," said Team GBR's Shaun Simpson, ever a shrewd assessor of a layout's virtues. "Some might call it a bit sketchy but it was amazing. Look at any turn and there were five or six lines and guys could come through the pack. There was passing going everywhere. As an event it felt like a football match at times."

"They were singing, air horns...it was amazing and this is what motocross is all about and it is so nice to see so many people supporting it."

"The track is good and so is the preparation," offered Febvre. "In some places it is really grippy but in others before the take-offs it is very hard and slick."

"I thought it was not as bad or as gnarly as people were making it out to be," commented Justin Barcia. "It was definitely a learning curve. Roger [De Coster] said it would be like supercross passing and I was confused at first but as I raced I saw it was really tight and you had to make those passes! It was tight and the lines were really strange compared to the U.S. where they are flowing and fast and here they were more 'stop-and-go'. On this type of track you cannot override the bike and I've been known to do that. So I had to shift up a gear, roll around and take the lines."

On Saturday among the French cheers for runaway pole positions in each class were offset by British tears. Max Anstie's horrific accident when he was clipped on the head and upper body by Pascal Rauchenecker led to a broken shoulder and T3 vertebra. The MX2 Grand Prix winner had been rolling down the vast hillside triple trying to restart his Kawasaki when the crash occurred and sent him flailing lifelessly further on. Austrian Rauchenecker amazingly stayed onboard. It was the most shocking moment of the weekend and significant for the results on Sunday. The Brits were highly tipped to end their podium drought with Simpson and KTM brandmate Dean Wilson strong competitors in the MXGP and MX Open categories. Simpson had a run-in with a backmarker on Saturday and was nursing a sore left arm and knee. With Anstie in hospital and leaving his British Championship hopes (the final round of eight takes place this weekend) in tatters the trio were again staring at occurrences that had conspired against them after Simpson's broken chain in 2014 robbed them of silverware.





Webb leads Febvre...only just. Roger de Coster (above) has food for thought but his Red Bull KTM rider Marvin Musquin was exceptional



The Scottish pair were talking of personal pride and of a desire just to round-out a long season on Saturday evening. Their lack of a result in MX2 meant they were dropped to eighteenth in the overall ranking behind the teams that had five classifications on the board. Their 6-8-8-11 scorecard meant that even one finish close to the top eighteen would have knocked the Belgians from the third step of the podium; a position the Flemish – led by Jeremy Van Horebeek - gained in 2014 and have not missed the uncorking of Nations rostrum champagne for eight years now.

On Sunday it was clear that the Chamberlain trophy would swing between the French and the Americans and the tension was ramped up higher as mistakes would ultimately play their part. There were moments of brilliance from the French: Febvre's double moto win eclipsing that of Paulin's in 2014 and further adding stock to his status as the fastest motocrosser in the world, and Musquin's speed and technique through the long ruts to make 250SX-F seem quicker than that of Justin Barcia's YZ450F in the first race. They also dropped the ball, with both the KTM rider and Paulin hitting the ground and conceding several points.

The Americans' excellence came through Barcia's holeshot and resistance to Musquin in the first race ("the fans are unbelievable. When I was behind Marvin I could hear all the cheering and then when I came around in front of him I couldn't hear anything. They kill it. It will be nice to have one of these races in the U.S. The fans will be pumped up."). The Yamaha

athlete then blitzed his way to third from a poor start in the third and decisive moto. Jeremy Martin was solid with a 5-5 in MX2 and Cooper Webb filled the Barcia role with Febvre in the second outing to resurrect their spat from California the previous week. "We had some good battles in Glen Helen and it was really clean but this morning he was following me during my lap. I saw that and started to slow down and he block passed me on the downhill and I did the same in the next corner," Febvre said on Saturday afternoon after Webb had made his intentions clear. "It is racing but we need to be careful when he is behind, for sure." There was extra juice in that tussle but Febvre proved to be supreme and halved the expectation on his shoulders after that first chequered flag. In Sunday morning warm-up the world champion had given the French cause for concern when he bashed his knee on the bars and almost pulled out of the session in pain. He would complete one more lap for reassurance and it was a close call.

"We have not come all this way just to follow," Team USA Team Manager De Coster had said on Friday. "The French are a very good team but I think my guys will fight for it and make it difficult for the Europeans. I think every rider I've come with [to the Nations] have 'wanted it' and have given 100%. Things have not gone our way in the last few years but we still finished on the podium last year with one rider with a broken foot. I feel that we will have the chance to win again in the future and things just need to roll our way a little bit."

With Barcia and Webb both submerged in the pack around the first turn of the final race and Febre setting off after the sprightly Ben Townley while Paulin motored in the top five; this was the crux of the whole meeting. Barcia fired back and Webb posted the sixth place what would be the American's joker result and the one classification that would be dropped.

Thirty year old Townley (see an interview in the next pages of OTOR) was contesting only his sixth race in two years and after a 'warm-up' at Glen Helen where he struggled to make an

Febvre getting to grips with the French terrain on Saturday. The hard-pack was softer and tackier than usual. The presence of wood-chip and continued pre-event prep ensured a course worthy of the Nations...and something that should be seen with every Grand Prix





impression in the heat. The way he hounded and snapped at Febvre's heels in the second moto ("For me the third race was a little more difficult with Ben Townley because he was riding really good. I tried to get away but he was sticking to my rear wheel.") was reminiscent of his performance ten years previously at Ernée for Team New Zealand as he tracked Ricky Carmichael. Credit also for Russian Evgeny Bobryshev whose consistent riding and positioning in the top five was crucial in the two point gap that would affect the final classification.

There was little doubting the star of Ernée. Febvre, still twenty-three years old, had been wide-eyed since arrival at the track and where he admitted that he needed to cope with new-found levels of stardom. "I don't know what to expect," he said on Friday at the last admission of his 'rookie' status in 2015. By Sunday he was confident enough to state: "For sure this is one of the best races I have done...just because of the crowd. You could hear them from anywhere and they gave more than 100%. To cross the line first at any time is always special but to win the Nations in France for sure it was the best experience."

The public really drove the heartbeat of the fixture because the vibrancy around Ernée was not quite matched behind the scenes in the paddock where the majority of staff and workers were happy a long campaign was coming to an end. This was the result of the 'optimistic' calendar that had MXGP hopping from Mexico to the USA to France in the space of three weeks, mixed with jetlag and coming from forty degree temperatures one weekend to hats, coats and scarfs the next. The exertions of the schedule was too much for some and Red Bull KTM's Pauls Jonass – an eighteen year old who had been through the mill of emotions in his late pursuit of the MX2 title – pulled out after three crashes on Saturday.

Some of the hardships and struggles were obfuscated by the sheer general excitement for the sport that was on a level I have not seen in all fifteen of the previous editions of the Nations I have attended. It was a magnificent, in-

vigorating and bewildering advert for the passion and fandom of the sport. Any prospective sponsors would have left a Grand Prix such as Mexico wondering what all the fuss was about but Ernée was an assault on the senses and showed that motocross followers have a connection with the discipline closer and more ingrained than any other motorsport.

Hosting the Nations in France means a virtual guarantee of a good show, and the fans ensure this. It is a hotbed for motocross and Maggiora in Italy next year should be at a similar intensity. Several figures commented that Ernée had a buzz that was missing in Latvia in 2014 and the central location of France in Europe – even though Ernée is hardly a breeze to get to – helped with this. Febvre, Paulin and Musquin fed off the crowd. "It was really cool to catch Barcia but I got too excited; the crowd was going crazy," Musquin said of his first moto. "I made too many mistakes and went down. It was a bit scary because I landed on my back but when you have a crowd like that behind you then you just want to get back on the bike and give 100% and that's what I did. Fourth was not too bad considering the crash."

"Everything about today was 'fighting' and trying to keep this title," observed Paulin. "We know the best are here so to defend the Nations in France and in front of that crowd was amazing. It was unbelievable the feeling we had on the bike and also around the circuit. Pascal Finot and the French Federation did an awesome job and gave us the best material to concentrate and get ready for this event. The hardest thing after winning last year was to keep the title here in front of the home crowd and we did it."

After an FIM World Championship mired in injury and more speculation on the format of the premier class for future years, the Motocross of Nations was a technicoloured reminder that people still have a thirst for MX. On Ernée's evidence and Youthstream's claims of increased attendances, viewers and followers then – thankfully – it is still unquenchable.



Justin Barcia gets ready for the downhill triple. This is where Anstie struggled on Saturday and ultimately where the British team's hopes would end





Evgeny Bobryshev was one of the best riders at the Nations thanks to good starts and reliable pace. Runner-up in the MXGP class for the Russian finished off a year in which he re-established his name as one of the protagonists in MXGP





No broken foot this year for Jeremy Martin and the American acknowledged that his outdoor rival Musquin was on a different level in front of home support

KIWI TAKES FLIGHT: BEN TOWNLEY

The '67' Honda flying around at the front of the field in qualification and then feeling the heat of Febvre's Yamaha belonged to New Zealand's Ben Townley. The first MX2 World Champion in 2004 and AMA East Coast Supercross Champion quit racing at the end of 2013 after a succession of injuries and frustration. We caught up with BT when he was a visitor at the Grand Prix of Europe in Holland back in April and then after a perfunctory appearance at Glen Helen last week that blew out the cobwebs of only four race events since he unbuckled his Alpinestars for the final time. Rumours of the thirty year old making a return to Grand Prix circulated last month and his showing at Ernée proved that the articulate veteran still has the speed to run with the world's best. Time for a catch-up...

Last weekend you said you didn't handle the Glen Helen heat too well. That was a much better job wasn't it?

Yeah, a much better job. I needed that race [the U.S.GP] to get myself in the groove a little bit. The heat did-me-in but at least it got me back in the game and helped for this weekend. These guys [Dave Thorpe's Buildbase UK Honda team] gave me a great bike and are a great group of people that helped me get in a good position.

Can you describe the sensation of being out there at the front of the Nations again? Particularly when you didn't get let go of Febvre's rear wheel...

I think Saturday was more the most exciting part for me because I led and Paulin was second. I hadn't had that sensation for a long time and experienced that atmosphere. I am not a historian but I think it is fair to say that it [the Nations] hasn't been this big since the 80s. With Paulin behind me that type of environment was incredible. Today was more 'business' because yesterday had validated to

me that if I got a good start then I can do it. In the first moto I struggled a little bit so in the second I just tried to lock on to Febvre's rear wheel. He rides on the edge so I was hoping if he stayed there then he might gift it to me!

The track looked a bit more technical second moto...

It wasn't actually because they had done a bit of work. I actually went and told them – in my best English without swearing – to not do any watering at all. In my opinion they are wrecking the racing [in MXGP] with the amount of watering they are doing. Today there was no dust and they listened very well and it was really good with some great racing. Anyway they needed to do that work to it because it was actually pretty gnarly and the speed we are going these days you need to work on what I would call the more dangerous areas and they did a good job.

I asked you about racing in GPs again in California and you used the words "highly unlikely"...

There is so much more than just racing. I feel great right now but I know tomorrow will be different! I already have a sore arm, pain in my hip. If I was – and this is purely hypothetical – to be a racer again I'd have to move my whole family to Europe and that is not easy because one of my boys is already in school. We'd have to live in the UK because we're English-speaking...I'm thirty years old and I'm not just going to do the job exactly how someone [a Team Manager] wants it to be done. It is 'highly unlikely' that I will race [full-time] again, not even in New Zealand and Australia. I actually really enjoy doing what I do but it would be nice to have a better support network in terms of bikes. Clearly, when I have good equipment and the right set-up I can go well. Never-say-never but at the end of the day I am thirty and I'm happy. And even more so after today.

Imagine you were ghost riding the Ben Townley from 2005 here. Much difference or memories from that time?

Not really. Yes, the context was similar...but I guess I don't like both as I didn't win either! First and foremost I want to win but the biggest thing for me today – as I said to Lucy [his wife] just before – was that I believe I still have the skill set to do it and prove to myself that I can do this. I retired through a concession of injuries and turmoil. I was so unhappy and I didn't want to continue in that rut and on that track. So it was really nice to race like this.



There was a real feeling of pride seeing you out and there and back at the front. It must be so much more intense for you when you think of your country and your kids. If it is some sort of 'final word' then it is an impressive career bookend...

Yeah...I don't know where it will go from here because I'd maybe like to try and race at Maggiora next year. I still am one of the fastest in New Zealand. Cody [Cooper] is right there but I have a lot of experience internationally. I would not say it is over but at the same time this experience has really opened my eyes to being a privateer and the process you have to go through to race is not easy. Again I take my hat off to this team because they have moved heaven and earth this weekend to get me comfortable. When I can get that way then I can race at the highest level and I always believed that personally. It is nice to achieve what I believed was possible.

What did your kids say?

I just spoke with my oldest and it is the middle of the night there. I couldn't hear him that well but he said something about 'letting a guy past and not getting him back!' I can't wait to see them again. I miss having Lucy here because it is a partnership that you build up. The kids have this pure emotion and joy. They are so raw with their emotions and I love that part of my life. I've been away for almost three weeks and I have been watching a couple of videos on my phone every night in bed over and over so I cannot wait to get home.



Cooper Webb gets out of the rut and out of shape at the bottom of the hill where the French fans' volume and support was at its most fierce.



Dean Wilson was reliable again for Team GBR despite being the last pick and again suffering misfortune in the overall result. The Scot was fourth in MX Open

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CYCLES...

By Adam Wheeler

The Motocross of Nations usually gets fans and followers feeling jingoistic at this twilight time of the season and on the way to Ernee I was thinking about Team Great Britain, the riders that were picked – Max Antie, Shaun Simpson and Dean Wilson – and how a racer's career is often put into the spotlight by virtue of their selection (or non-selection) for this annual event.

Take Tommy Searle for example. The 25 year old has virtually been a dead-cert pick for the Brits since his emergence as a Grand Prix-podium-grabbing sixteen year old in 2006. To my memory he has only underperformed once at the Nations with a perfunctory run in the sand of Lommel in 2012 (not '100's strongest surface anyway). His MX2 class victory last year in Latvia when back on the 250 was superlative stuff after what had been an uninspiring second term in the MXGP premier category of the FIM Motocross World Championship. 2015 has been horrible for Tommy with a succession of poor luck and injury casting more doubt over his abilities to rise to the top in the big bike division. In 2012, after the best season by a British rider since Jamie Dobb's 2001 125cc world championship winning term, Searle still has to find a Grand Prix podium.

Examine Searle's trajectory in the sport with that of Shaun Simpson then it is a curious contrast. Searle blazed bright early, and moved into a position of a mega contract in the United States before coming back to Europe and again enjoying a profile as the UK's fastest. Simpson took three years in MX2 to prosper, shone, then jumped into MXGP where he struggled to find a team and package to again reach the heights. Simpson himself admits he has been a 'slow burner' and from entering MX1/MXGP in 2011 he is now the

country's most successful athlete at the peak of the sport and recognised as one of the most accomplished sand riders in the world. Some have commented that Searle has already peaked (it seems unbelievable) while Simpson is on the crest of arguably his best spell at 27 with KTM factory support due again in 2016. It is weird how some riders find and reap the purple patch(es) in their career. Do they really only ever have one or two shots at the big-time? Do health, circumstance, motivation (most GP stars have been in competition on two wheels and in a lifestyle of compromise and sacrifice since their childhood) and experience only collide at certain times? No wonder it is a tough game mentally.

Anomalies like Tony Cairoli come along once in a generation. MXGP is littered with names that have to endure the cyclical nature of sport and fortune. People like Kevin Strijbos (29) who can go from factory status, big bucks and being number two in the world to regular operating-room visitor, near obscurity and then bouncing back again to the position where his services are hunted by some of the best-funded teams in the paddock. Take Jeremy Van Horebeek (25). Runner-up in 2014 but only reaching the podium twice this term, ten times less than last year. Has Clement Desalle now suffered one season-wrecking injury too many to still be that feisty championship-challenger we saw in 2010 and '11? (He didn't win this year for the first time since '09) And Max Nagl also...For an extreme case of the sharp highs and crashing falls of being a Pro racer then look no further than Jeffrey Herlings: the most dominant rider in the post-Everts era but even proclaiming himself "f**ked" before the age of twenty-one in the wake of two seasons with seven injuries or illnesses of note.



Some of the individuals in the last paragraph are examples that second and third chances are possible at the pinnacle of sport for success and its trappings. Those quick to write-off Searle (and they might have done for Simpson when he was riding a JK Yamaha for nothing at the end of 2013) could be made to look hasty if he finds anything like the same groove and combination with Steve Dixon's Monster Kawasaki as he did in similar CLS colours in 2012. It is perhaps a little absurd but Pro riders might actually use criticism and adversity to push themselves to the limit once again, to go beyond the lengths they will already travel for personal pride.

Of all the permutations and predictions for 2016 I'm curious to see who will discover that rich, fresh phase of their career and side up to the expected protagonists.





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WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR...!

By Steve Matthes

Well, it's all over bar the crying for the supporters and fans of Team USA. Team France, the favorites going in, eeked out a narrow victory over the red, white and blue by virtue of a stellar clutch third moto.

The two countries, tied after two motos (with the worst score dropped) had everything on the line in the third race of the day. And Romain Febvre and Gautier Paulin got the starts when they needed them and Team USA did not. Really it boils down to that on the tight, frugal Ernee track where starts meant everything. Justin Barcia and Cooper Webb fought hard to come up through the pack but it wasn't enough on this day. Team France wins the MXDN for the second year in a row, the first time they've done that in their history and the first team to repeat since the USA did it in Lakewood Colorado and St Jean D'Angely in 2010 and 2011.

Judging by my talks with members of Team USA throughout the weekend though, this latest loss (ties the longest consecutive years without a win for USA counting the years they didn't send a team and is now the record for longest American MXDN losing streak in years they did send a team) was met more with a fate of resignation.

"The French were good, we knew that ahead of time and with them riding this track two weeks ago, they knew their bike set-up" said USA manager Roger DeCoster "Starting from the first practice on, they had everything dialed in. Marvin (Musquin) rode a great race and so did (Romain) Febvre although I suppose he was expected to."

"I'm happy, not for finishing second, but for the ways my guys rode. I don't think people thought they would do as well as they did. Barcia rode great."

There was no other team close to these two this year, the injury-depleted Belgium's 56 points would have had them seventh or eighth most years, this time it was good enough for third. USA and France were on another level and although it was France with the worst finish out of the two countries, that score was dropped and the moto winners went 2-1 (Barcia's moto one win was the first time an American had won a moto since 2011—Gasp!)

With each defeat, this reporter notices more and more calm coming across the USA members. It's taken four years but the European riders might be gaining stature in the eyes of some members of Team USA. Romain Febvre's win last weekend at Glen Helen the latest sign that this isn't the mid-80's anymore.

Justin Barcia's win was great, his second moto comeback from a bad start was something that Jeff Stanton used to do to win these things. On this day, it wasn't enough. Jeremy Martin battled Marvin Musquin basically to a draw though 22 motos this summer across America and outside of the first half of the first moto when Musquin went bonkers, they were close all day long. No one was saying anything about these two rides.



The wild card of the team, Cooper Webb, did fine. He led early in moto two before getting caught and passed by Febvre (how sick of each other must these two be?) but then did a great job of sticking with the World Champ and following him to the checkers. The third moto, Webb actually passed Barcia at one point before stalling. The last ten minutes he appeared a bit spent but hey, second overall via his 2-6 finishes was a good showing for a rookie.

"I heard from other people that the rumors were that it was stupid to put Cooper on the 450, that he would crash his brains out" said DeCoster "But he rode well. In the second half of the world championship I don't think Febvre was passed at all, and Cooper did that. Our team did better than we had the last couple of years. I'm really proud of our guys."

The USA team knew going in it would be a tough ask to get back to the top without their absolute "A" team going in compared to what was the "A" team of France. After it was over, none of them produced what could be looked at as weak results. Team USA rode great. Team France rode greater. End of story, see you next year in Italy where it's not going to get any easier for the once dominant kings of the sport to win this race.





BRENT VANDONINCK



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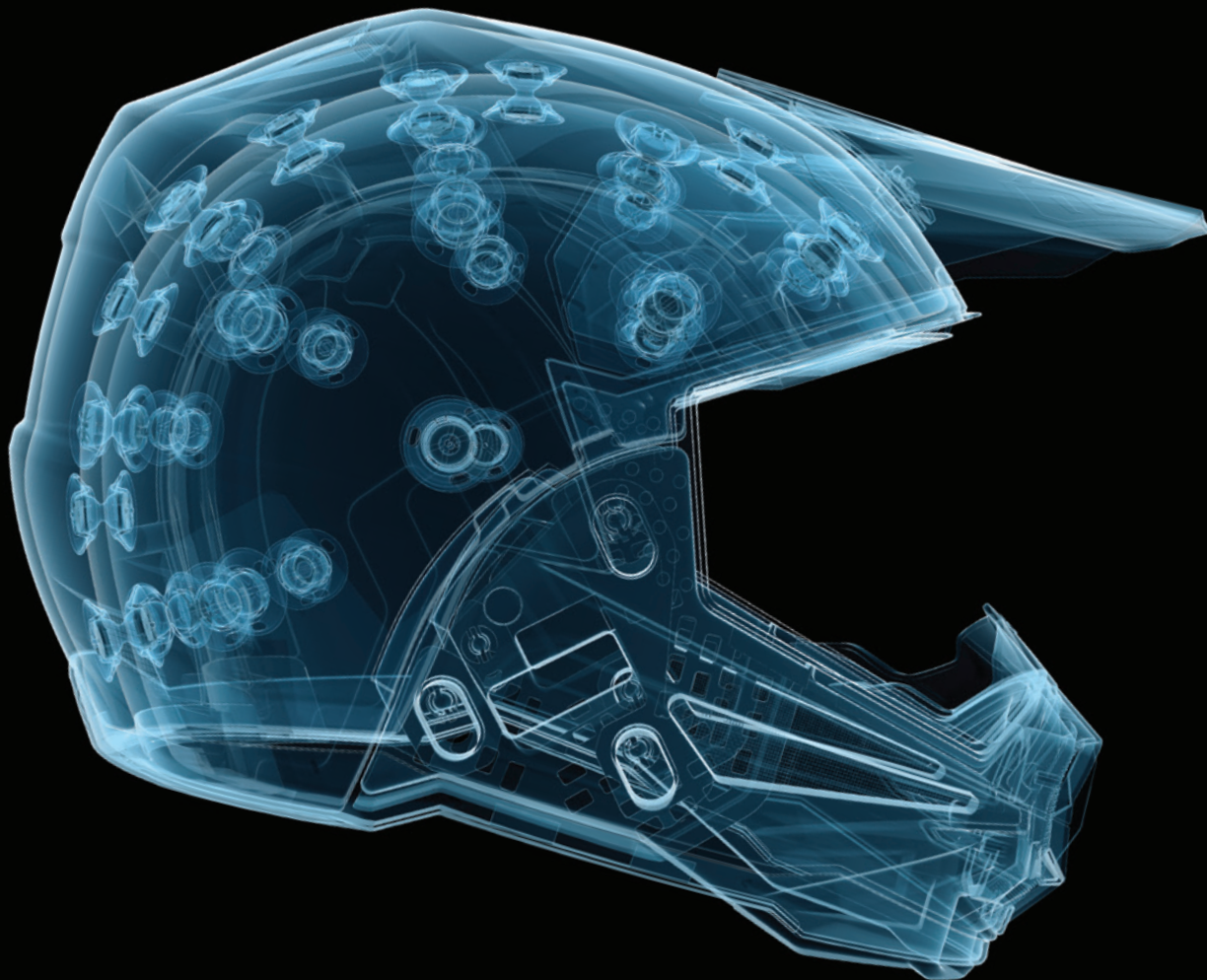
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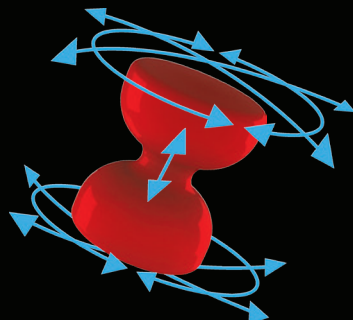
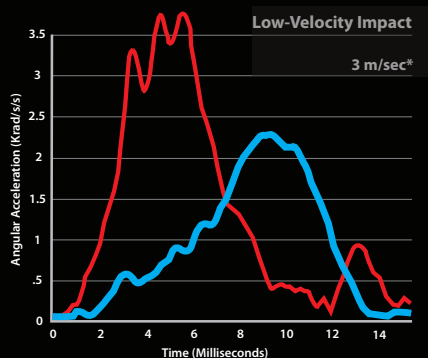
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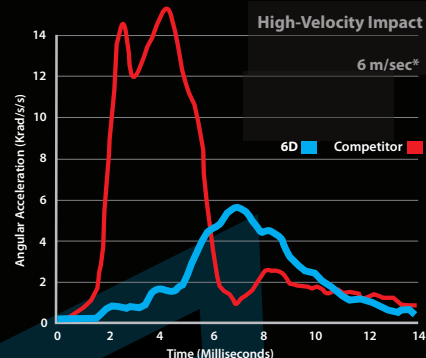
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ROMAIN FEBVRE

ON THE CREST...

ROMAIN FEBVRE HAS HAD A PHENOMENAL RACING SEASON SURPASSING ALL EXPECTATIONS AND PRODUCED A NEW WORLD FORCE OF MOTOCROSS. WE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM IN THE MIDST OF THE FRANTIC END TO 2015 BETWEEN MEXICO, USA AND FRANCE

By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer

“Another interview?” are words that MXGP World Champion Romain Febvre has uttered a few times since his path to thirteen consecutive Grand Prix podiums, including eight victories, began to look more solid at the midpoint of the season. We did however want to pin the ‘461’ down to try and understand what it feels like to achieve so much, so fast and with such an emphatic effect. To become a star almost overnight even if his rise in Grand Prix has been building with the same gurgling momentum that thrust him to the forefront of the sport internationally once his confidence started to bubble over.

We have already looked at the reasons for Romain’s emergence and examined the character that allowed him to become champion material in a previous issue of OTOR but now we wanted the twenty-three year old to try and tell us about the impact of his achievements. Never an easy topic to articulate, especially when you get the feeling that Romain himself is still taking baby-steps in realisation himself and might not fully gain perspective and appreciation until he is on holiday somewhere after growing his legion of fans in the USA and then tenfold in France with his 1-1 at Ernée for the Motocross of Nations. We’ll have a go anyway...

OK, so the morning after the Dutch Grand Prix at Assen and you are world champion. Was there a different feeling?

No, not really, it was the same as any morning but...I was so happy! The day you get the title it is difficult to understand everything that is going on around. Hard to take it all in. So each passing day after Assen I was thinking about it. The biggest difference was in the media demands and the amount of people that were talking about me. I didn’t change the world, the world around me changed. I dreamt about the title all my life and it happened. It is just so satisfying.

Assen was crazy but it built up to that. You have been more and more in demand since the middle of the year...

Yeah, we started the season slowly because I was not ready at the beginning. The results started coming quickly and I finished in some good positions early on when I knew I was not ready. So with good preparation and better settings on the bike I knew I could expect more from 2015. My confidence started to build and I always seemed to have a good feeling on the bike. Life became much easier.

The rider that started the year in Qatar and finished the championship at Assen: has he changed much?

No, no. My level of confidence yes, for sure, but for the rest there was no big personal change. I was riding at a good level and the bike was ready. The confidence adjusted things for me and it was a big part of the job.

At Assen people were pulling you in all directions...

When I crossed the line I didn’t know I was champion and we had to wait for Gautier’s fourth position to confirm it. When he crossed the line it was good! And everybody was happy. I will never forget that moment. It was chaos and all went so fast. I think that is the same for the last few years as well...every season has been moving quickly. I realise I am champion more with every handshake and ‘congratulations’. When something happens that you dream about then it does not mean you suddenly enjoy every day a lot more. You enjoy a big part of your life but I also feel that it came so fast. I think I will personally feel it more during the winter because you cannot just switch off and relax when there is still racing to do. After the Nations I will try to get some rest and enjoy life.

ROMAIN FEBVRE



So how does it feel to achieve a dream because it is something that not many people will do in their lives?

That is exactly what I told myself and my girlfriend. I am so lucky to make it happen. I know that every person on the planet has a dream and most cannot realise it. To know I have made it gives me so much confidence and almost some 'tips' for the future when I will have some bad moments. I'm a lucky boy. I want to be the same and I will do the same. It is difficult to say 'yes' to all the media otherwise I would not have a life so I have to learn to deal with that pressure and it is part of the job. I hope I will get used to it and maybe think about more titles.

What about the comments that you only won this thing because of injuries to Cairoli and co?

You can do everything good...or everything bad but there will always be someone who says "that's shit" and makes a judgement. That's the world. I'm not really looking at what people say and I think if you try and listen to it all then you will go crazy. At the beginning of the season we are all equal and every rider has the same chance. Afterwards you need to work with that chance and try to be the best. In 2013 I started the season well. It was only my second year in GPs and I was second in the championship but then I broke my foot and finished twelfth. Everybody was ready in Qatar this year...but I wasn't. And still got some good results. Many fast riders got injured this year but that is the sport and I beat some good riders when they were in shape also.

Now you need to learn about being world champion...are you ready?

I need to get used to it! And work on it, for sure, because I do not want to change my

character. I think it is a good problem to have! Especially for your career. When you realise your dream you feel that anything can happen. I think even if I have a bad time in the future I will try to be positive. I need to get some more dreams and try not to be bored after a few years.

Only 23, Marquez was world champion twice by the age of 21...

I've done motocross and riding all my life. If I stop I'm not sure what I would do. Right now I really have the motivation and the focus to race motocross but in the future I don't know. Maybe I will be bored and want to change to something else. Now my new goal is to try the MotoGP bike.

Was there a moment this year when you were riding better than ever? Or maybe it was a time back in MX2...

For sure it was this year because I have progressed a lot. In MX2 I was kinda used to the bike but the 450 was a huge difference and when you are in your rookie season it is not easy. This year was the best progression of my career. As for the best moment that's hard because there are a few to pick. Villars [sous ecot, French GP] and my home GP was good. Taking victory there was perhaps the best moment because it was the first time. Even if I take more wins and titles then this will stick in the mind.

The Motocross of Nations was a new level of attention. It was amazing that you were not overwhelmed by it all. Did you feel like a rockstar?

Not a rockstar! But for sure it is a nice feeling to have. I came to Ernée with the world title and the French won the event last year so to come on French soil and defend it is prob-



ably a dream for any French rider. To win both motos and help the team win again...it cannot be better and I cannot be happier. I think everything I saw out there [at Ernée] just blew my mind a bit. So many people and they are 'more than 100%'. They didn't stop cheering and you could hear them everywhere. It was unbelievable.

It must be hard to beat all these new feelings and sensations again. In the future all you have is numbers: a second title, a third, another win...

Yeah, sure. It is hard to imagine having the same emotions. It has been an amazing season. I still don't believe I have the world title and to win at Ernée...I think I cannot be better in my career: to win that title, so many races and now the Nations. It will be difficult to do the same! I will do my best and I know everything came together this season; my fitness was good, the bike was amazing and the team did a great job. The confidence increased. I really need to take some time off to realise what I did.

You and I have been talking about racing since February and what was a very different scenario for you then. It seems the guy has stayed pretty much the same but the world around you has gone crazy...

I hope I haven't changed and I want to be the same with everyone. For sure everything around me is becoming a bit crazy at the moment. I need to deal with it and I will learn more for next year. It is becoming difficult to walk in the paddock without anyone around me...but it is a nice problem to have.

Finally: going to treat yourself?

No...for sure we will take a nice holiday but nothing really special.



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ATL



odigy

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45





SCOTT

We've sung long and loud about Scott's on-road riding gear for good reason: you cannot beat the quality. For touring and accumulating hours in the saddle then the winter and mountain sports experts know their stuff when it comes to breathable, resistant and protective products. The Concept DP jacket (black, 280 euros) comes with a three membrane layer system to ensure waterproofing, adjustment options, pockets and placements for protective padding. The Concept VTD (grey, 319 euros) is the next level up with a host of minor details like soft-cuffed magnet closing collar, ventilation with magnet closing systems, SAS-TEC protectors and triple strong stitching, a total of seven pockets in, out and on the back and wax coated fabric reinforcements.

Paired with the pants the VTD is ideal for mixing off-road and on, and has elements like fleece lining inside the waistband, stretch panelling, ventilation SAT-TEC for the knees, Anti-slip panelling, three pockets, snap-and-hook closure and adjustments at the waist and hem. The DP has details like a one-zip weather protection and high-visibility reflective parts.



For the leather option then try Scott's Tourance Leather DP jacket (699 euros). Scott state that their upper and lower garments: 'combine the light, soft and comfortable benefits of textile with the strong protective features of leather. Carefully crafted, the leather and 3-layer DRYOsphere membrane are bound together to ensure a completely reliable waterproofing, perfect for three season use.' The shell is made from 1mm cowhide mixed with the Dryosphere. There is a kidney insulation system, stretch panelling, aquaguard zips, SAS-TEC protectors, five pockets and all the best and adjustments you can make to have this premium product fit in the best possible way.



SBK

PIRELLI SPANISH ROUND
JEREZ · SEPTEMBER 20th · Rnd 11 of 13

Race one winner: Tom Sykes, Kawasaki


Race two winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati

World Champion: Jonathan Rea, Kawasaki

Blog by Graeme Brown

Photos by GeeBee/Kawasaki/Aprilia/Ducati Corse Press

THE TIME
THE PLACE....

A high-angle, low-light photograph of a motorcycle racer, Jonathan Rea, leaning into a turn on a dark asphalt track. The track is bordered by a blue and white striped kerb. The rider is wearing a green and white racing suit with a red helmet. The lighting creates a long, dark shadow of the rider and the bike on the blue surface to the left. The overall mood is dramatic and focused.

JONATHAN REA FINALLY SWUNG THE AXE ON WORLD SUPERBIKE AFTER LEAVING RIVALS IN HIS WAKE FOR THE BETTER PART OF SIX MONTHS. THE NORTHERN IRISHMAN MIGHT HAVE FELT AGGRIEVED WITH HIS FIRST 'NON-PODIUM' FINISHES OF THE CAMPAIGN AT JEREZ AS TEAMMATE TOM SYKES AND DUCATI'S CHAZ DAVIES RAN OUT WINNERS BUT THE BIGGER PICTURE WAS COMPLETED



Chaz Davies again sets the pace and at a venue where he totalled many laps through his Grand Prix experience. His Race Two success was his fourth from the last six races as he heads into a fight with Sykes to be runner-up in '15





Sykes heads the podium for the first time since Misano and along with Davies, Rea & Haslam ensure the Brits carry on a shutout from the twelve rounds so far in 2015





FAT LADY USHERED ON...

By Graeme Brown

This year was being like a kid waiting for Christmas. You knew it was coming but it seemed to take forever, and then, suddenly, it was here. Jonathan Rea finally wrapped up the 2015 Superbike Championship at Jerez. Ironically it was Rea's worst result of the season ending his run of finishing on the podium at every race. A fourth place in race one sealed the deal however, and the cork was out of the Prosecco. Actually leave it in for now. Rea was clearly vexed by that race one performance and there was another outing to run in less than an hour.

A small symptom of how the WorldSBK show is run these days is that there is no time to bask in any glory from race one as before you know it, it is time to go again. Second time round another fourth place and the new Champion was not in an overly ebullient mood. By 7pm after a round of interviews and a photoshoot he was ready to head off to a team and sponsors dinner. He lamented the fact that he hadn't sat down all day to consider what he had achieved. I am sure there will be plenty of time for that in the coming days and weeks.

Kawasaki also won the manufacturers title on the weekend for the first time in the company's history, so with the titles taken care of more or less everyone's attention is turning to 2016.

It looks as though there will be 'one in and two out' on the manufacturers list. Crescent Racing is set to swap allegiances from Suzuki to Yamaha [deal done! Ed]. This signals an end of an era. For as long as I can remember Crescent have fielded Suzuki's (I go back to BSB in the late 90's). There would appear to be the possibility of another team running the bikes next year but it would be the 2015 machine for half a year and the 2016 GSX-R for the remainder. The orderly queue has yet to form.

Another casualty looks to be Aprilia, again. All signs point to a similar scenario as last year. The bikes will be available to be leased and run by a private team. Rumour has it that one team owner has a budget of 1.2m euros but has been told by Aprilia it is not enough. On the other hand Dorna would appear to be less than pleased as well. An 'insider' suggested that pressure has been applied to Aprilia since Dorna smoothed the financial driveway for the Italian manufacturer to return to MotoGP and it would be ungentlemanly to take the money in one had and keep it with the other! A game of brinkmanship is at play and I reckon it will be deep into the winter before we see who stands firm.

With manufacturers chopping and changing there is inevitably a bit of rider movement for next year as well. This week's worst kept is that Yamaha will run with Alex Lowes and Sylvain Guintoli. Haslam and Torres are currently opening as many options as they can with the Spaniard looking at the vacant seat at Honda. One suggestion I heard was for Haslam to move to Pedercini on a Kawasaki but I spoke to Leon on Sunday evening and he is confident that he will be riding an Aprilia next year but with whom he didn't know. With a knowing smile he did also say that there were other options.

Kawasaki will have an all-new ZX-10R for 2016 and whilst Rea and Sykes will continue in the factory team there are a number of other new squads asking to run the new bikes with a support package from Kawasaki. There will need to be a fair bit of 'due diligence' I imagine, but we may see more green bikes on the grid next year.

For now the fat lady will provide the accompaniment for the last two races at Magny Cours and Qatar where I am sure more juicy gossip will come to the boil.





ALPINESTARS

Autumn is officially here so time to put the vented riding gear away and get ready for some slightly more inclement weather. On the road Alpinestars have the trick with two items braced for the drop in temperatures and a spot of rain.

The Pike Drystar jacket (350 euros) has a 100% waterproof lining and comes with a zip-out thermal layer. It is durable thanks to the lower arm leather panels, has venting zips and Velcro for personalised close fitting. It has the protective elements of the shoulder sliders and CE-certified padding around the same area as well as the elbows and – being from Asolo – looks pretty fetching in either black or red. There are also high-vis trims as part of the design and a zipper section so you can connect some riding pants – like the Radons (200 euros). These boast multi-panel poly-shell construction for durability, protection and weight saving and CE-certified knee protectors. The pre-curved legs and stretch panels around more ‘delicate’ areas assists in terms of comfort and like the Pike is built from Drystar material and has a removable lining. Both can be found or ordered at any store or dealer that stocks Alpinestars’ wares.

www.alpinestars.com





JET SETTING

YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED MAVERICK VIÑALES THIS SEASON AS THE BLUE TINGED ROOKIE HAS PLANTED BOTH FEET IN THE MOTOGP CLASS WITH APLOMB. OTOR GRABBED A VERDICT ON 2015 SO FAR WITH THE FAST-MOVING TWENTY YEAR OLD

By Joseph Beale
Photos by Suzuki Racing



MAVERICK VIÑALES



In less than two years the highly talented young Spanish rider Maverick Viñales has risen from a Moto3 title candidate to a factory MotoGP star, regularly achieving top ten results in the premier class on the works Suzuki.

Heading in to the final few rounds of the 2013 Moto3 season Viñales battled with compatriots Luis Salom and Alex Rins in one of the most thrilling title fights in history. Ultimately he would secure the lightweight class crown at the final GP in Valencia, before moving up into Moto2 last year, to impress the paddock with a stunning victory in just his second race on 600cc machinery, at the Circuit of the Americas in Texas.

Whilst Suzuki were preparing for their return to MotoGP team manager Davide Brivio was closely monitoring Viñales' progress in Moto2 and the rider's obvious raw ability, matched with an uncanny skill to avoid crashes and notch points on a remarkably consistent basis, meant the Japanese factory would fast-track the youngster to the top. Viñales won three of his last five Moto2 appearances before joining Suzuki and his form has been solid once more in 2015.

Lining Viñales up alongside his more experienced countryman Aleix Espargaro was an intelligent move by Brivio and Suzuki have done a decent job with their MotoGP comeback in 2015, thanks to the efforts of their two riders. With four races remaining in his rookie season at the top level Viñales sits 12th in the overall standings, just two points behind his colleague Espargaro.

Asked to summarise how he has found things so far in MotoGP, Viñales told OTOR: "For sure it has been better than Suzuki and I were expecting because the bike was a bit better and in the end we got really good results in some races. So I think it's really positive."

"Right now we need to get back to how the feeling was earlier in the season and continue to be strong like we were at Brno which I think was the best race for us. We think we're doing a positive job and we can improve a lot."

On the experience he has gathered so far in 2015 and what he feels he needs to improve on the 20 year-old stated: "One thing I have definitely learnt is to work really hard! Because there are a lot of different jobs to what I had last year like electronics set-ups and you have to speak to a lot of people in the team, so I've learned a lot from this."

"I think we need to improve a little bit on the first lap of the race because for us it's a bit difficult. Also if the bike improves this can help and for sure I need to learn how to be calmer, because sometimes I'm a bit nervous."

Indeed, the pressures of competing with the best riders in the world could faze less talented riders than Viñales, but in fact he has quickly adapted to the Suzuki MotoGP bike and he has approached his first season in the premier class category in a similar way to his 2014 rookie Moto2 season.

"Since I was in Moto2 the preparation has been quite similar, I go to the gym, do cycling and running, not really special training," he explains.

MAVERICK VIÑALES





"I just go and try to enjoy my day and enjoy the training. On any weekend when I don't have a race I just go training. Normally I like to do motocross and also cycling so maybe it's Saturday motocross and then Sunday cycling. Sometimes I just relax and rest, sometimes I go into the city."

On working with Brivio and Espargaro as they spearhead an important project for Suzuki, Viñales commented: "With Davide I know he has a lot of experience. He's worked with so many good riders so I can benefit. What he has seen with others, I can learn from that. I always talk with him and he tells me what he sees and what I can improve."

"With Aleix we need to be friendly. It's not very intelligent if we start to fight between the two Suzukis as we need to get to the top. Then at the top we would see if we can continue to be friendly because you never know! It becomes a battle every day and then it's difficult to keep a friendly relationship."

Giving his views on the return of Michelin as the MotoGP tyre supplier in 2016, Viñales is also positive. "I expect that it's going to be a bit better for us because the Michelin has a lot of rear grip and that's something we've been struggling with this year. So in that area we are going to improve. We will see with the front tyres. I spoke to a few riders who told me the front is not like the Bridgestone one, but I think Michelin still have quite a bit of time to improve."

Looking ahead to the flyaway rounds and setting out his objectives for the final phase of the season, Viñales added, "in Japan I really want to have a good race because it's the home round for Suzuki so I want to show how strong Suzuki is and be at the front. My objective is getting into the top ten in every practice and then to have a good race."

"Another nice objective is for us to finish within 25 seconds of the winner in the race. That is also like a victory when we can achieve something like that, because now with the engine we think we lose 0.5s or 0.6s per lap, so that is the overall gap we need to get to, being within 25 seconds of the race winner."



PRODUCTS

BARBOUR

Winter collection time from one of the premier fashion labels when it comes to motorcycle gear and themed casualwear. The traditional and renowned wax jackets are in place (with roots all the way back to the 1960s and the Enduro/Rally scene) as are variations with the quilted coats and Parkas. There are six new shirts to choose from (shown here is the Stanley) and then into the t-shirts that carry the usual eye-catching designs and high quality cotton build and usually quite a slim fit. From the knitwear you have the Sanglass and Throttled (blue) as our pick from the selection.

For more info check out the website: <http://www.barbour.com/eu/all-collections/mens/barbour-international>







MotoGP

Gran Premio Movistar de Aragón
MOTORLAND ARAGON · SEPTEMBER 27th · Rn

MotoGP winner: Jorge Lorenzo, Yamaha

Moto2 winner: Tito Rabat, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Miguel Oliveira, KTM

Blog by Matthew Roberts, Photos by Repsol Honda,
www.yamahamotogp.com, Ducati Corse Press, Milagro, Monster Energy

**SWING-
BACK**





The fifth DNF of the year for Marquez after a remarkably familiar front-end slide and crash and on just the second lap. The champion admitted it was a rider error "When a season is not going well for you, then nothing goes your way," he said.





MotoGP ARA

Tito Rabat gains some much needed confidence with a second success of the year while Rossi gets that podium feeling back after the disappointment of Misano



After crashes in the two previous meetings at Aragon it must have been a relief for Dani Pedrosa to get back on the box for only the third time in the current campaign...especially in the manner of his defeat of Rossi and the close battle between the two old rivals. Pedrosa, now 29 has been a target for rumours over a potential move to KTM when the Austrians get their MotoGP project rolling







Bradley Smith posted eighth position and still has a 100% top ten record of results in 2015. The Brit is fifth in the championship with four races to go



FISH TALK...

By Matthew Roberts

The latest MotoGP race at Aragon saw another tidal shift in the chase for the title between the self-styled 'little fish' and a man who was all too willing to accept the role of the shark. With fourteen points between Valentino Rossi and Jorge Lorenzo and four rounds to go, you'd imagine it's going to take another deluge at either Sepang, Motegi, Phillip Island or Valencia to keep Rossi afloat and out of the jaws of his team-mate now.

I thought Jorge's celebration, when he stood on the pegs of his M1 and made a fin with his hand on his head, was in good humour and I was surprised to hear him criticised by television pundits after the race, notably James Toseland. JT suggested that it was an arrogant celebration, and one of the reasons why Lorenzo could never be as popular with the fans as Rossi.

Personally, I saw it as the perfect response to Rossi's mind games because for all of the wit behind the Misano helmet design (which I thought was brilliant, by the way), there was also mischievous intent. For the seven-time World Champion, holding the championship lead with six rounds remaining, to paint himself as the underdog was tongue-in-cheek at best and, at worst, another example of Valentino using his playful image to surreptitiously undermine a sensitive rival.

The week after Casey Stoner won the title at Motegi in 2007, Rossi produced a new helmet with an aboriginal design for the Australian Grand Prix. Up until that year, Phillip Island had been his race and he is still adored by the majority of fans there (as he is everywhere!). Like all of Aldo Drudi's work the design looked awesome and the fans loved it. But I know for a fact that Casey didn't, and for him to make the Island his own over the next six years was special to him for several reasons.

Did Rossi really intend to undermine Stoner at Phillip Island or Lorenzo at Misano? I'm not sure, but let's not be confused by who the real shark is here. Rossi is a maverick, a genius, and in my opinion the best thing that ever happened (and is happening) to our sport. But he wouldn't have won a single title without the rapacious edge that makes him as unpopular with his closest rivals as he is popular with the fans.

Behind the main 'Jaws' storyline last Sunday was a sub-plot more reminiscent of 'Finding Nemo', as a diminutive orange contender rediscovered himself in the dangerous waters of the feuding Yamahas. The 97th podium of Dani Pedrosa's premier-class career was not beyond the realms of expectation at a circuit he has won at before but it was significant in terms of its execution, as for one of the few times in his long career he overcame Rossi (overcame anybody, for that matter) in a last-lap battle.

Not many riders can lay claim to that particular feat so for Pedrosa, who admitted it is a weak point in his riding, this performance was a sign of his growing strength and confidence after an injury-hit season that cast doubt over his future. And let's face it, in a season when the dominance of the top three has again been brutally apparent, this championship needs a rider capable of beating them. At his very best, Pedrosa fits that bill.





DE ARAGÓN

CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
2	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda
3	Valentino Rossi, ITA	Yamaha
4	Andrea Dovizioso, ITA	Ducati
5	Andrea Iannone, ITA	Ducati

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 14 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Valentino Rossi	263
2 Jorge Lorenzo	249
3 Marc Marquez	184
4 Andrea Iannone	172
5 Andrea Dovizioso	143

Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Tito Rabat, SPA	Kalex
2	Alex Rins, SPA	Kalex
3	Sam Lowes, GBR	Speed-up
4	Jonas Folger, GER	Kalex
5	Thomas Luthi, SUI	Kalex

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 14 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Johann Zarco	284
2 Tito Rabat	206
3 Alex Rins	184
4 Sam Lowes	144
5 Thomas Luthi	142



Moto3 RESULT

Riders

1	Miguel Oliveira, POR	KTM
2	Jorge Navarro, SPA	Honda
3	Romano Fenati, ITA	KTM
4	Efren Vazquez, SPA	Honda
5	Philipp Oettl, GER	KTM

Moto3 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 14 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Danny Kent	234
2 Enea Bastianini	179
3 Miguel Oliveira	159
4 Romano Fenati	155
5 Niccolò Antonelli	136





PRODUCTS



100%



2016 liveries and designs by apparently one of the top selling goggles in North America have recently 'dropped'. According to the American brand the latest fares highlight: 'a translucent frame in our popular neon colours. Available in the Racecraft and Accuri series. Both models feature mirror and clear lens options, triple layer foam, oversized 45mm strap, and opview lens technology for an expanded field of vision.'

One of the reasons why 100% has grown rapidly and widely has been through a sharp combination of look, quality and price. They have also been proactive with their marketing and endorsement work (look no further than the bespoke adverts created for every new edition of OTOR). While they expand into the bicycle world the San Diego firm have not left moto goggle development behind and the launch of their new Forecast roll-off system is a major forward step and will take the 'vision' fight to ProGrip with companies like Scott also allegedly set to bring in wider scope for cleaner sight.

100% say their 2016 line featuring the Translucent Series is in stock now at your local dealer and online at www.ride100percent.com



TEST

DARK SIDE

By Roland Brown, Photos by Lyonel Beylot, Stefano Gadda & Marco Guariglia

HARLEY DAVIDSON'S ATTACK ON THE SENSES COMES THROUGH THE DARK CUSTOM RANGE - FORTY-EIGHT, IRON 883 AND (FOR-SOME) THE STREET 750. ROLAND WENT TO CATALUNYA FOR A CRUISE AND AN OPINION...



DARK CUSTOM HARLEYS



TEST

Cutting through the Barcelona traffic at a respectable pace, the band of Harley-Davidsons makes quite a sight. When the road opens out, I glance back to see V-twins arranged in a straggly line, with riders gripping raised handlebars, and chrome glinting in the sun.

Not much glinting though. The three updated Harley models in this group form the firm's revamped Dark Custom range. There's blue and red and olive-green paintwork here, but mostly there's black. And there's plenty of mechanical variety, of V-twin layout and capacity, in the trio: the Forty-Eight (right), Iron 883 (below, right) and new-for-some-markets Street 750 (above).

Of the three, the Street is the odd one out. It's the latecomer of the group: launched in many countries including the States last year, it's only now being released, in modified form, in others including the UK. It's also produced in India rather than the US, and has a 749cc liquid-cooled, 60-degree, sohc engine instead of Harley's traditional air-cooled, 45-degree lump with old-fashioned pushrod valve operation.

The Forty-Eight and Iron are Sportsters: members of what has traditionally been Harley's small-bike family, sneeringly dismissed as "paper-boy's bikes" by snootier riders of the firm's Big Twins. But the Street makes no apology for being entry-level. It was created as a more keenly priced Harley that will attract new riders and converts in markets worldwide.

At a glance, especially in black, it resembles the legendary late-Seventies XLCR Cafe Racer that was Harley's stylish but doomed attempt to compete with Ducati's sportier V-twins. These days that café-racer look is simply cool, and the Street's flyscreen adds a historical touch that will be lost on most of its audience. Harley will be hoping potential converts won't



Its riding position is typical cruiser apart from slightly higher footrests, but the liquid-cooled V-twin motor comes to life with a notable lack of lumpy air-cooled character. Performance is decent, though; the 50bhp-or-so output and crisp fuelling combining to give reasonably lively acceleration, effortless 70mph cruising and a top speed of about 100mph.

The simple steel-framed, twin-shock chassis works pretty well. At 229 kg the Street isn't light but it steers easily, stays stable at speed, and even gives respectable ride quality thanks to suspension travel that is generous by cruiser standards. Shame the mirrors are narrow, ground clearance is no more than adequate and the seat is not particularly comfortable.

At least Harley has uprated the single front and rear disc brakes after criticism last year, though the lack of ABS on a bike aimed at novices still smacks of cost-cutting. Then again, the Street is seriously inexpensive, at under £6000 in the UK. For that money there are plenty of people who'll find a genuine Harley-Davidson very tempting.

Even so, they might do well to give the Iron 883 a spin before taking the plunge. This was the baby of the range until the Street came along, and it's no more powerful or faster despite having a larger-capacity 883cc engine. It also sounds disappointingly quiet in standard form.

DARK CUSTOM HARLEYS





"THE FORTY-EIGHT IS THE MOST EXPENSIVE OF THIS TRIO AND ONE OF THE LEAST PRACTICAL BIKES ON THE MARKET. IT'S ALSO ONE OF THE COOLEST. ..."



But there are accessory pipes to change that. And the Iron's traditional Sportster look and feel, with air-cooled V-twin lump jumping around on its rubber mountings at idle, contributes to an appealing character that the Street can't match.

It works reasonably well, too, helped by an updated chassis whose cartridge forks and shocks with progressively wound springs give respectable ride quality, despite the slightly lumpy seat. New wheels save a few useful kilos in weight; brakes have reasonable power and ABS as standard.

And although paint options include a gorgeous Hard Candy Custom Gold Flake with flame detail, Harley says the finishes "were selected to help hide the grit and grime of riding and living in the urban environment, for riders who don't care to own a garden hose". Sounds like my kind of bike.

Except that in one important respect – performance – the Forty-Eight is better. Named after the peanut gas tank that Harley first used in 1948, it holds less fuel (just 7.9 litres, dragging range well below 100 miles) but has a larger, 1202cc engine. It's not much more powerful, with a modest max of about 60bhp, but has more grunt, kicking out its peak torque at a lowly 3500rpm.

Its chassis is updated along similar lines to the Iron's, with new suspension and lighter wheels – in the Forty-Eight's case 16 inches in diameter, wearing fat tyres that contribute to the squat, muscular look. Lower bars and forward-set footrests give a hunched-forward riding position that soon becomes uncomfortable, but the tiny tank means you'll be stopping soon anyway.

The Forty-Eight is the most expensive of this trio (at roughly 10,000 pounds depending on paint option), and one of the least practical bikes on the market. It's also one of the coolest. The new Street might offer that famous badge on a budget, but if you're looking for Dark Custom soul and character it's the Forty-Eight that is the real deal.







BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
By Monster Energy







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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